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Mission News:

In March, Mission staff were heavily engaged in a) preparing components of the U.S. Embassy FY 2010 Strategic Plan (MSP), and b) planning activity and data gathering as required to prepare/finalize the Integrated Operational Plan in April. As elaborated below, different elements of the Mission portfolio supported important national and international forums such as: the 10 March Electricity and Heating Sector Emergency Preparedness Workshop, the 11 March Mongolian National Trade and Transport Seminar, the 28-29 March Prime Minister's Seminar on Anti-Corruption, and Mongolia's participation in the 4-9 March International Tourism Bourse in Berlin. USAID implementing partners for the Gobi Initiative and the Growing Entrepreneurs Rapidly Project are gearing up for spring intensification of field activities. Similarly, the Mission is preparing an aggressive schedule of project site visits to remote areas of Mongolia.

Program News:

PROGRAM AREA: PRIVATE SECTOR-LED ECONOMIC GROWTH

Economic Policy Reform and Competitiveness Project (EPRC)

Chemonics

www.eprc-chemonics.biz

Economic Policy Support

Impact of tax reform: Assessment of the impact of new rates for VAT, Corporate Income Tax (CIT) and Personal Income Tax (PIT) has been delayed due to technical difficulties

in processing customs VAT data. Annual CIT data has become available and PIT and customs VAT data are now expected to be available in April from the Mongolian Tax Authority (MTA).

Trade Policy Support

Feasibility study for Zamiin Uud logistics facilities: Continuing project technical assistance to the National Committee on Transport and Trade Facilitation (NCTTF), a joint team from EPRC and the Mongolian National Customs Administration (MNCA) visited Zamiin Uud and Erlian during 21-24 March to examine the process and facilities for clearance, inspections, and trans-shipment. Constraints for the efficient handling of imports, exports, and increased revenues from transit are, in order of importance:

- Insufficient number of locomotives and rolling stock of the Ulaanbaatar Railways, an issue being addressed through other projects (e.g. MCC) and outside the scope of the present analysis;
- Inadequate road-to-rail trans-shipment facilities and management; and
- Inadequate physical facilities for border clearance.

In the forthcoming technical report, the project will propose two specific clusters of interventions a) improvements at the clearance services facilities at Zamiin Uud (Customs and State Specialized Inspection Agency—SSIA); and b) new Road-to-Rail Trans-shipment Facilities using a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.

National Program to Establish Single Electronic Window (SEW): EPRC continues providing support to the SEW Working Group in implementation of its national program. On 19 March, over thirty inspectors from the State Specialized Inspection Agency (SSIA) attended a one-day seminar, “Trade Facilitation in Mongolia,” where EPRC made a presentation: “Single Electronic Window: International Cases and Opportunities in Mongolia.” The project has also received the draft *pro-bono* feasibility study that the *Société Générale de Surveillance* (SGS) conducted in Mongolia in late November and early December 2007. EPRC will review this report and formulate recommendations to the SEW Working Group concerning next steps.

Technical support for the “Transit Traffic Agreement between the Governments of the People’s Republic of China, Mongolia, and the Russian Federation”: Beginning in late March and with assistance from an international expert, the project will work with the NCTTF and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the development of technical Annexes for the tri-lateral agreement. NCTTF and the GoM view conclusion of such a tri-lateral agreement as an important element in the strategy to develop the competitiveness of Mongolia as a transit corridor between China and Europe and generate services revenues.

Competitiveness Support

Secondary Mortgage Markets: On 15 March, the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs (MOJHA) and the Financial Regulatory Commission (FRC) with EPRC assistance, organized a round table meeting to present the draft securitization laws to the relevant ministries, government agencies and working groups and initiate their discussion prior to

the formal circulation of the draft laws. The objective of the event was to discuss the need for development of Mongolia's capital and housing finance markets by introducing covered bonds and asset (mortgage)-backed securities and two draft laws that will regularize the legal and regulatory environment for such financial instruments. MIK, the Housing Finance Corporation (HFC) and the Mongolian Builders' Association participated in these discussions. The MOJHA is expected to circulate the draft laws to all ministries for official comments as the next step in the legislative process.

Credit Information Bureau (CIB): The International Finance Corporation (IFC) delivered to the Mongolian Bankers Association (MBA) CIB working group their feasibility analysis, preliminary business plan and recommendations for the structure of a privately owned and operated credit information bureau. After circulation of the report to its members, the MBA discussed and voted on the recommendations. The MBA is engaging the IFC to assist with a tender to source an internationally recognized CIB operator to establish and operate a Mongolian CIB to be owned 49% by the operator and 51% by Mongolian private sector stakeholders. EPRC continues to advise the MBA working group.

Mongolian National Tourism Organization (MNTTO): At the request of the Ministry of Roads, Transport, and Tourism (MRTT), MNTTO with EPRC assistance co-organized the participation of Mongolian tourism companies in the International Tourism Bourse (ITB) 2008, in Berlin from 4-9 March. ITB is the world's largest annual international tourism and trade fair. Eleven Mongolian tourism industry organizations presented a joint exhibition which was also attended by other high level Mongolian delegations. In addition to preparing the ITB exhibit, the MNTTO also organized a press conference and a Mongolian cultural event which drew over 25 media representatives and generated interviews and coverage by major German media outlets.

Business Development Fund: EPRC's Business Development Fund is co-financing an international expert to assist Erdenet Carpet Joint Stock Company, a privatized Mongolian manufacturer of woven woolen carpets, to improve productivity and ensure compliance with European Union ecological standards. The objective of the four month consultancy is to assist Erdenet Carpet working groups to identify and implement improvements to achieve a 20% productivity improvement and continue the recent trend of 20% annual domestic and export sales growth.

Energy Sector Support

Energy Sector Financial Status: Minister Ch. Khurelbaatar and the Energy Regulatory Authority (ERA) are diligently collaborating on the tariffs with significant support from EPRC as a first priority to improve financial performance of energy sector entities. A detailed Tariff Reform Plan is drafted and will be presented to the stakeholders during the weeks of 31 March and 7 April with the goal of gaining approval to implement the plan.

Energy Working Group and GoM/external partners meetings: The MoFE has formally appointed Messrs. Chimeddorj and Ganbaatar, the Heads of the Departments on Energy

and Fuel Policy and Regulation, respectively, as permanent members of the Energy Working Group (EWG). The next EWG meeting is scheduled for 17 April, 2008. The next GoM/External Partners Technical Meeting is not expected until after Naadam.

MoFE re-organization and priorities: The Project submitted its comments and recommendations on the latest draft energy sector policy and strategy document to the MoFE and USAID on 18 March 2008. The MoFE's intent is to submit the final version to the Cabinet in the coming days. The policy/strategy includes all of the Minister's priorities, which are in harmony with EPRC recommended priorities.

MoFE and ERA collaboration: Per the MOU signed on 29 January, MoFE and the ERA have been working through the tasks and have already completed several of them, particularly in the area of tariffs.

Electricity and heating sector emergency preparedness: The emergency preparedness workshop was held the week of 10 March, 2008 in UB. It was well attended, well organized and with a high level of participation resulting in recommendations to improve emergency preparedness for all Mongolian ministries, agencies, etc. with emphasis on the energy sector.

Public Information/Public Education (PI/PE) campaign: With the Press Institute, the project is conducting a series of media workshops before the heating season ends in late April. The first workshop was held on 12 March at the UB Heat Network Company (UBHN) for print journalists and radio/TV reporters. This event allowed the UBHN air time to explain their operation and functions, as well as to present their issues, problems and future plans to upgrade and rehabilitate the system. The media coverage was generally an accurate reporting of the UBHN presentation. The project is scheduling a similar on-site workshop at Dalanzadgad Combined Heat Plant (CHP) on 29 March 2008 and at Darkhan CHP in April 2008.

The project is continuing the planning process for a series of up to four television programs to be aired throughout 2008, starting in April 2008, concerning energy sector issues/problems. The series will run under the auspices of the *Open Government* website.

Performance Agreements: The ERA finalized terms of Performance Agreements (PAs) for 2008 with the Baganuur and South East Region Electricity Distribution Network, the Darkhan CHP, the Erdenet-Bulgan Electricity Distribution Network and CHP #4. Negotiations continue between the ERA and the other two large Central Energy System licensees (the UB Electricity Distribution Network and the Transmission Company) regarding execution of Performance Agreements. When executed, these PAs will cover virtually all energy assets of the Central Energy System, which produces and distributes over 90% of the country's energy.

Energy legislation: Working groups continued working on the drafts of the Concessions and Energy Conservation laws. The Project continues to review and comment on each

draft as received. Discussion of progress on proposed amendments to the Energy Law is on the agenda of the next EWG meeting scheduled for 17 April 2008.

Development of the CHP #5 Tender Process and Documents: On 25 March, the tender Working Group requested the Project's assistance to review and comment on the tender document with emphasis on several key areas. The MoFE target date for completion of the tender documents is 5 April, 2008.

National Dialogue Support

Design of new Open Government television program series: The project completed the evaluation of proposals and the script for the first TV series is in draft form. The initial programs will concentrate on the heating sector and its current capacity. The Ulaanbaatar Heat Network Company is actively involved in the provision of content for the program.

English language website for the Mongolian Tax Authority (MTA): The project continued work with MTA on the development of an English language website to make tax information available to foreign investors and residents. Formal launch of the site is expected to take place in early May, during the national Taxpayers' Week.

Taxpayers' public information campaign: MTA and the project are developing a three-to-four series of short TV spots focused on new facilities being offered through the MTA website such as electronic tax filing and access to company names database for company name registration.

Gobi Regional Economic Growth Initiative (GI)

Mercy Corps

www.mercycorps.org.mn

Sales

Gobi Initiative uses sales generated from new business activities outlined in the formal business plans developed under the project as an indicator of success. Total sales for herder and non-herder businesses for March 2008 reached \$50,415 and \$68,709 respectively. This puts total sales for herder businesses in 2008 (by end of March 2008) at \$196,839 and for non-herder businesses at \$302,545. This gives CY2008 total sales up to the end of March of \$497,682, which can be compared to the sales target for CY2008 for all GI clients of \$ 3.9 million (M). Total sales generated by business clients under the Gobi Initiative Phase II from January 2004 to date is \$9.1M vs. total USAID funding for the Gobi Initiative (less the subgrant to Pact) to date of \$5.2M.

Loans

In March 2008, herder and non-herder clients took 16 loans valued at \$53,727 for which Mercy Corps provided \$21,902 (41%) as additional cash collateral to commercial banks. The total number of loans accessed by Gobi Initiative clients in the first three months of the year is 101 and the total value of all disbursed loans increased to \$285,815, with the

average loan size for the year remaining at \$2,830. Mercy Corps has provided a total of \$112,762 as additional cash collateral. This constitutes 39% of collateral provided by Mercy Corps as compared to 84% at the start of the program in May 2004. Since the start of the program, a total of 652 loans have been disbursed with a total value of \$1.71M. The repayment rate to date stands at 96%.

Selection of clients

At present, 307 herder and non-herder businesses have developed their business plans and received approval to start implementation. In addition to this, 14 new clients have been selected in March and are developing their business plans. By the end of the first quarter this year, Gobi Initiative will be working with 321 business clients.

Training of Trainers (ToT)

Mercy Corps Mongolia organized a ToT session for aimag-based consultants for eight days during March 20-27 in Ulaanbaatar aiming to strengthen the capacity of locally available business advisors and Business Development Service (BDS) providers. Attended by 32 local consultants from six Gobi aimags, it focused on improving the participants' understanding and skills on teaching methodology and training of adults. Sixty-six percent of all participants were trainers and consultants from selected BDS providers. Having completed the training, the participants will prepare individual assignments and will be certified depending on the quality of the submitted assignments. The certifications have been approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

First trainings of BDS providers

Selected BDS providers in six Gobi aimags began offering first trainings to Mercy Corps clients and non-clients. First trainings were successfully organized in Uvurhangai and Bayanhongor aimags. Trainings included financial management, marketing, cooperative formation, planting new potato seeds and dairy production for a total of 38 participants, 26 of whom were MC clients. Mercy Corps plans to support and expand BDS providers in all Gobi Initiative aimags and has selected a total of eight local providers to work with this year. By supporting these BDS providers, the program expects to ensure that the training and technical assistance activities initiated under the Gobi Initiative program will continue independent of donor funding. BDS providers will be organizing 41% of all planned trainings and technical assistance for Gobi Initiative clients in 2008.

Value Chain Survey

Yak wool, camel milk and barley value chain surveys have been conducted in the aimags of Uvurhangai, Umnugovi, Dundgovi and Bayanhongor. These surveys continued over four months. This month, the reports of the survey findings were finalized by the aimags and are being consolidated in the UB office. The surveys identified the constraints and opportunities of these sub-sectors. The survey team proposed specific solutions to these constraints and recommended potential interventions. In 2008, Mercy Corps will look for the opportunities to implement activities identified within the framework of the surveys.

International Travel Mart

Seven Mercy Corps clients from Uvurhangai, Dundgovi and Umnugovi participated in the International Travel Mart organized by the Mongolian Tourism Association in Ulaanbaatar during March 28-30. Our clients promoted their activities, established links with other tourism companies and exchanged information and experience. They learned from other organizations how to attract tourists, sell their products, become a member of a tourism network and other useful knowledge and tips. The participating local camps established business linkages with tour operators in UB.

Rural Business News magazine

Rural Business News (RBN) Magazine edition #57 was published in March in the new 24 page and 4-color page format. It contained 12 seasonal stories, messages to herders, farmers, businesses and local residents. The lead story emphasized Mercy Corps' soum master plan implementation process in the Gobi-Altai Aimag. The RBN Magazine subscription number through Mongol Post Company has increased by 400 copies as a result of the RBN Marketing campaign.

Rural Business News radio

A preliminary discussion between the head of Media for Business and director of Mongolian National Public Broadcaster (MNPB) regarding free of charge RBN Radio program airtime was held in March. Sixty minutes of RBN Radio programs on MNPB each week will be broadcast free of charge, upon the closure of Gobi Initiative project. The free broadcasting agreement is to be concluded within the second quarter of 2008. This is a significant step for MNPB in taking up its role as a public service broadcaster.

Market Watch

The Market Watch automation system was successfully launched in the beginning of March with 22 well-trained market watchers. The 509 Service contract between Media for Business and Mongol Content LLC was signed in March. The monitoring of market watcher's performance within the system is under way.

Gobi Forage

The preliminary selection of a host organization for Gobi Forage has been completed. The Institute of Botany, Academy of Sciences is now under a preliminary screening and negotiation process with MC. The current and forecasted forage maps are produced 2 times a month and notice of new posted maps are sent to research, government institutions and land officers in 21 aimags and some soums with internet connections.

Future events

Mercy Corps is organizing a study tour in Ulaanbaatar for its clients engaged in food processing. The topic of this study tour is "Food production and packaging." Nineteen clients will participate in this tour from five Gobi aimags (except Gobi-Sumber) to learn about new advanced food technology, marketing techniques, and how to improve their packaging. The clients will visit Ulaanbaatar food processing businesses and training centers.

Growing Entrepreneurs Rapidly (GER) Initiative

CHF International

www.chfmongolia.org

In March, the GER Initiative helped to improve or expand 45 businesses, created seven start-up businesses, and generated a total of 19 new jobs. Also this month, the GER Initiative matched 36 ger area residents to jobs.

Financial Services

GER facilitated 27 loans valued at over \$36,709 with local partner banks and 20 USDA funded Capital Augmentation Fund (CAF) loans valued at \$39,059 were disbursed through local banks.

The GER Finance Coordinator met with Xac Bank to discuss the development of a specialized loan product targeting pig farmers and their unique financing needs. As GER counts many pig farmers among its clients, and the industry is growing in Mongolia, Xac Bank and GER will work together to better understand these businesses and their financing needs. With information provided by GER, Xac Bank hopes to launch this specialized product in the very near future, possibly using GER clients to test the product.

Training and Consultancies

GER conducted 185 trainings with 86 clients participating, and 79 consultations were provided to 69 clients.

In March, GER introduced a package of training and consulting services for clients. GER has developed seven different packaged trainings: the New Loan Client Package, the Market Linkage Package, the Producer Business Package, the Human Resource Management Package, the Service Business Package, the Start-Up Business Package, and the Business Group Package. In this first month of availability, 31 Ulaanbaatar clients elected to purchase packaged services, showing that demand for such packaging may indeed be high. In Darkhan, 4 clients purchased the Start-Up Business Package, which includes the Start-up business, Project Writing, Borrower's Education, and Savings and Consumption trainings.

Information Services

GER provided 521 information services to 294 clients, and six information meetings were held with 73 clients participating. Information services related to agriculture were in high demand during March due to the approach of the spring planting season. All branches reported an increase in sales of such manuals for the month. Also, a substantial increase in the demand for construction manuals was seen during the month in all branches. The CHF-developed construction manual continues to sell well and is much appreciated by clients who have purchased it.

Selenge Business Advisors organized an information meeting entitled, "Financing Needs for New Businesses," which provided information and advice to 13 start-up business owners and residents who wanted to start their own businesses.

Employment Services

GER matched 36 clients to jobs and 12 clients entered vocational training programs. A total of 20 employment trainings were held for 20 clients. A total of 19 jobs were generated. In Ulaanbaatar, 35 clients graduated from a cellular phone repair vocational training conducted by the “Solongo” training center and 15 clients graduated from English training at the “Gegeerel” training center.

New training partnership agreements were concluded in March with the “Shine Garts” and “Ulaach Chandmani Company” professional training centers. They provide road repair and vegetable production trainings, respectively, under the government’s vocational training voucher program. GER concluded new employment matching agreements with the “Ganbros” and “Tavan-Erdenet” companies.

Linkage Services

GER facilitated linkages between businesses worth approximately \$19,460 this month. The Linkage Team and CHF’s Innovating, Monitoring, and Promoting Poverty Alleviation by Cooperatives in Transitional Societies (IMPPACTS) Coordinator have arranged a partnership with the Mongolian-German Bridge NGO to assist in their campaign to replace plastic bags with cotton bags in leading supermarket branches throughout Ulaanbaatar. GER will be responsible for selecting the micro businesses to produce the cotton bags, monitor the completed products, and provide consulting and training to help the businesses form cooperatives. Other partners in the project include the Mongolian Chamber of Commerce, The Ministry of Environment, and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

The Bayan Ulgii GER Branch celebrated Nauriz with its second annual trade fair. The local community provided much support with the Governor supplying space and workers; several businesses sponsored prizes, awards, and gave monetary contributions. Twenty-five clients participated with booths and generated \$1,860 in sales. A new linkage relationship was established with Three Summit LLC, which provides geological services, consulting and education.

Business Association Development Services

GER worked with 89 active groups this month. Two new groups were formed, and no groups disbanded. In Choibalsan, a decorating and repair business group, “Mandal,” was formalized, with GER assistance, into a limited liability company “Chambai uur” (“Tough Nest”) in order to participate in a tender. In Ulaanbaatar, a new informal business group was formed with assistance from business advisors at the Sukhbaatar branch. Three mothers of disabled children have joined together in a business group to generate family income by producing cotton bags and other simple products. Due to their children’s disabilities, these women must stay home to care for them and so cannot work outside their homes. The new group received GER’s New Business Group packaged training service, which includes the Group Leadership, Group Bookkeeping and Group Savings and Consumptions trainings. The Mongolian “Save the children” Program, who

has been working with the disabled children, will provide this new business group with a sewing machine so they can begin production immediately and complete their first orders.

PROGRAM AREA: MORE EFFECTIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE

The Judicial Reform Project (JRP)
National Center for State Courts (NCSC)
www.ncsc.com

Courts

The General Council of Courts (GCC) adopted new procedures on case flow management in the fall of 2007 that became operable at the beginning of 2008. In order to provide guidance to court personnel and judges on the implementation of the new procedures, the JRP has formed a working group in cooperation with the GCC and Supreme Court to create a manual that will provide step-by-step instructions for court personnel and judges on the new procedures. The working group continues to develop the manual and on March 13th, the members of the group held a roundtable discussion with Dr. Heike Gramckow, NCSC Deputy Director, to exchange thoughts on the contents of the manual.

The JRP continues to oversee updates to the Judge software. The new updates will create a more compatible system with Microsoft Windows, allow for easier data transmission to update the judicial database, meet the requirements of the new procedures on Caseflow Management such as a unified case numbering system for civil cases, and allow the courts to analyze their performance.

General Prosecutor's Office (GPO)

The JRP organized an introductory training on the basic principles of case flow management for the GPO management group based upon the experiences of the courts. The Capital City Court Administrator, N. Dagva, made a Power Point presentation on how the case flow study was implemented in the courts, lessons learned and why the process is helpful. A GCC officer, R.Mendsaikhan, made a short introduction on the development of case standards.

Commercial Law

A commercial law expert arrived in Mongolia to assist the Mongolian Chamber of Commerce and the JRP in creating a training program and certification examination for legal advisors. The goal of this activity is to create a system of oversight and training for graduates of law schools that pursue careers in commercial law. During this visit, the expert is assessing the knowledge and skills of the potential trainers, selecting and training the trainers (ToTs), and assisting the Chamber of Commerce to develop an action plan for organizing the certification process.

Police

The JRP completed its automation of two pilot police stations. The automation of the police stations will create a more efficient and effective working environment for the police but more importantly it will provide opportunities for greater oversight of criminal investigations by prosecutors as required by law.

Public Education

The JRP printed another 1000 copies of the popular booklet “Contracts for Herders” that explains to herders the benefits of utilizing written contracts, explains how to use contracts, and contains pull-out contract samples that can be used by herders during commercial transactions. The contract samples address a sale and purchase, sale and purchase to an intermediary, agreement to sell and purchase in the future and a supply contract. The booklet will be distributed to the public through Mercy Corp, GER Initiative and the Civic Union beginning in April.

The JRP duplicated all 12 episodes of the “Blue Book” public education series on CD-ROM. The JRP will distribute 300 sets in April to law schools, TV studios and NGOs. The TV series provided education to citizens on criminal laws and trial procedures by dramatizing real life trials. The program also included expert commentary to ensure the laws and procedures are understood by the viewers.

The JRP, through a subcontract with Pact, continues airing a radio drama series on Criminal Law entitled “Do Not Violate.” The program airs on Mongol Radio on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the morning at 0710 hours and is repeated in the evening at 2115 hours. The program utilizes recurring characters to dramatize crimes to explain provisions of the criminal code to the public. The JRP entered into an agreement with Mongol Radio to create a radio program to continue educating the public on the criminal and criminal procedure codes once “Do Not Violate” concludes. The program will be broadcast nationwide on three channels and follow a similar format as “Do Not Violate.”

The JRP participated in an “Open Day” that was sponsored by the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs. The JRP created an exhibit and distributed public education materials including posters, manuals and CD-ROMs. The JRP also explained the project’s activities, goals, and achievements to the public.

JRP also published its English newsletter that discusses project activities. This publication included the following news stories: *JRP Signed an Agreement with Mongolian National Radio on Production of a New Public Education Drama Series; JRP Project Director, Dr. Heike Gramckow, to leave the National Center for State Courts; Expert on Commercial Law Arrived in Mongolia; and JRP Participated in the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs Open Day.* The newsletter was delivered to more than 20 international organizations and local legal institutions in Mongolia and was also distributed to key USAID officials and other counterparts in DC. The goal of the newsletter is to inform stakeholders about JRP activities and coordinate activities of donor organizations as well as publicize the JRP achievements.

Future Activities for April

A computer systems expert will visit UB to assess the needs of courts and prosecutors' offices to make recommendations for sustainable programs in case management and reporting. JRP will conduct a ToT for trainers participating in a certification program for legal advisors of commercial law. The JRP will continue to broadcast the radio program "Do Not Violate" as well as begin developing a new sustainable public education program with Mongol Radio. JRP, in cooperation with the GCC, will start the selection of courts to extend the Public Affairs Officer's work to include further development of information for self-representing litigants and community outreach.

The Mongolian Electoral and Parliamentary Support Project (MEPS) ***International Republican Institute (IRI)***

www.iri.org

June 2008 Parliamentary Election News

On March 19, the Chairman of General Election Commission of Mongolia (GEC), Mr. B. Battulga, stated that the GEC has launched a voter education training program with the assistance of the United Nations Development Program. Some 1700 voter education trainers will be trained and deployed to the cities and provinces to organize grassroots seminars and meetings. Recently, such seminars were held in the Baganuur, Songinokhairkhan and Khan-Uul districts of Ulaanbaatar. The GEC is planning to conduct voter education sessions for the senior grade students of high schools and junior grade students of universities and colleges. Mr. Battulga noted that the nationwide drive to renew a registry of voters for the upcoming SGH election was conducted from January to March 2008. The renewed registry was submitted to the GEC by the Citizens Registration and Information Office at the end of March.

Supporting the General Election Commission

In March, IRI held several meetings with the Head of Administration of the GEC, Mr. Bayanduuren, to coordinate IRI's election program activities with the planned activities of the GEC. IRI will be donating 10,000 ballot box seals to the GEC to help ensure the integrity of the election. The ballot seals that will be donated to GEC are single-use tamper-evident seals with serial numbers ranging from 1-10,000. The ballot seals will be delivered to the GEC in mid-April.

From early May through mid-June, IRI will conduct party poll watcher training seminars throughout Mongolia. IRI party poll watcher manuals, updated according to new election laws and voting procedures, will be distributed at these trainings. IRI plans to publish some 10,000 poll watcher manuals. In March, veteran IRI Mongolia poll watcher trainers Prof. Sukhbaatar and Dr. Tamir began drafting the IRI poll watcher manual. The draft will be edited by the Head of GEC Administration, Mr. Bayanduuren. The Chairman of the GEC, Mr. Battulga, will write a foreword for the manual.

Based on the request of MPRP leadership, IRI is planning to hold one central poll watcher seminar in Ulaanbaatar for the MPRP's poll watchers. As was done in the past, two poll watchers from each aimag and district (a total of 60 people) will attend IRI's poll watcher seminar for the MPRP. Poll watcher seminars will be conducted for poll watchers of the

Democratic Party on a regional basis (as was requested by the party). A total of 17 seminars will be conducted for poll watchers of DP in aimags and Ulaanbaatar. Currently, IRI is working on the agenda and the budget of the training seminars. A poll watcher seminar will also be conducted for the smaller parties.

Nationwide Poll in Advance of Parliamentary Election

IRI has almost completed a nationwide public opinion poll of 1800 respondents. Data collection was completed on March 18 and data analysis is currently in-process. The results will be shared with political parties in mid-April. This is a partnership between IRI and the Academy of Sociology of the National University of Mongolia and US pollster, Ms. Sarah Simmons. IRI is planning to conduct a 2nd nationwide public opinion poll with a sample of 1000 respondents. The results of that poll will be released to the political parties by June 2.

Women's Voices in the Political Process

On March 4, the German Frederick Ebert Foundation sponsored a women's forum under the title "For equal participation in politics." The Forum was organized by the women's auxiliaries of the MPRP, DP, CWP and Motherland Party. Some 100 women politicians from these parties attended the event. The main purpose of the forum was to emphasize the importance of increasing women's participation in politics and governance and to raise public attention of the abolishment of the 30% women candidate quota provision in the SGH election law. The keynote speaker of the event was German MP, Ms. Ute Kumpf, who shared the German Social Democratic Party experience on introducing and implementing a women's quota. The Director of the IRI Mongolia Program, Mr. James DeWitt, and leaders of the women's auxiliaries of the MPRP, DP, CWP and the Motherland Party, addressed the audience on relevant subjects.

On March 12, the Democratic Women's Union (DWU) under DP organized a Democratic women's forum at the Parliament House. Some 1000 women politicians from all over Mongolia gathered to discuss the problems facing Mongolian women on the path of democracy. The Chairman of DP, Ts. Elbegdorj, congratulated the delegates and the Chairwoman of DWU B. Delgermaa addressed the women delegates on the topic "Women during the democracy years." Also, General Secretary of DP, D. Dorligjav, gave a speech on "Party grassroots organizations and their policies." Member of the DP National Consultative Committee, B. Baabar, spoke on the "Electoral system" and the Director of the Voter's Education Center (VEC), Ms. R. Burmaa, delivered a lecture on the "New Election Law."

Ethics for MPs and High Ranking Officials

In March, IRI met with Deputy SGH Speaker D. Idvekhten, Chair of the Working Group on Ethics Rules, MP A. Tsanjid, and Chair of the DP Council in the SGH, MP L. Gansukh, to discuss the status of draft ethics rules. The MPs stated that the Ethics Rule will be included on the agenda of the spring session of the SGH.

Assisting the SGH in Adopting and Implementing Committee Rules

During the upcoming spring session of the SGH, IRI will continue to advocate that the remaining three committees that have not yet passed committee rules of procedure do so. IRI is publishing a manual which includes committee rules passed by the SGH standing committees.

The Mongolia Anti-Corruption Support Project (MACS)

The Asia Foundation (TAF)

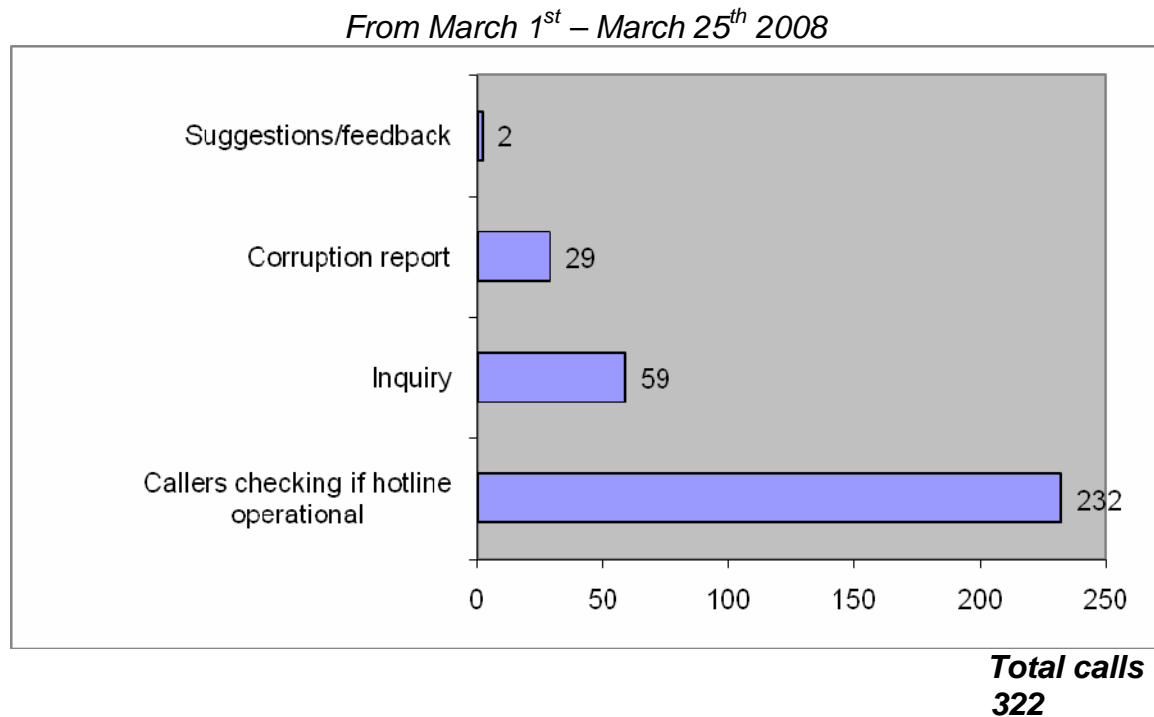
www.asiafound.org

IAAC Institution-building and Advocacy

TAF has worked very closely with the Cabinet Secretariat and with the Independent Authority Against Corruption (IAAC) to prepare for a senior level 2-day seminar at the Ikh Tenger Reservation on March 28-29. The seminar responds directly to the Prime Minister's (PM) January Decree requiring that all ministries and line agencies develop anti-corruption action plans and risk mitigation plans. The seminar included 26 Ministry and Agency officers at the State Secretary level, with a report-out on the second day to the Prime Minister and all Ministers. The PM's decree and the seminar are a direct outcome of recommendations by international expert Tony Kwok on the importance of strong ties and cooperation between the IAAC and the GoM ministries and line agencies in the fight against corruption.

Public Awareness and Education

In partnership with TAF, the IAAC launched the second phase of the multi-media campaign on February 11. The campaign delivers key messages such as "zero tolerance" and provides citizens' access to the IAAC Corruption Reporting Center. The campaign ran through March 9. The Center received 322 calls in the first 25 days of March. See chart for specifics.



Since the launch of the campaign on 19 Nov., the Corruption Reporting Center has received more than 1,000 calls, of which more than 50 were corruption-related reports. While the pace of calls increased rapidly with the initiation of the campaign, and then declined during the New Year period, volume resumed in February and March. Importantly, the volume of corruption-specific call has increased over the four months, and the IAAC is currently investigating 48 corruption cases reported via the hotline.

Benchmarking Survey

Data for the fifth and penultimate Corruption Benchmarking survey was conducted by Sant Maral in March, and the results will be publicized in late April.

Donor Coordination

TAF continues to actively work with World Bank and ADB to enlist and coordinate donor support for the IAAC.

CENTRALLY (USAID/W) OR REGIONALLY (USAID/RDMA) FUNDED PROJECTS

Eastern Steppe Living Landscape Project - Sustaining Wildlife and Traditional Livelihoods in the Arid Grasslands of Mongolia *Wildlife Conservation Society(WCS)*

www.wcs.org

Living Landscapes Program (LLP)

Eastern Steppe Conservation Planning: The WCS/USAID Eastern Steppe Program staff spent much of March summarizing information from the Conservation Planning workshops held in January and February and preparing proceedings from these workshops. The Remote sensing/GIS specialist met with the World Wide Fund for Nature's (WWF) GIS officer and The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) GIS specialist to re-work the Eastern Steppe threats map and include TNC's study area. In addition, wildlife use violations recorded by volunteer rangers were mapped for three community-managed areas in the Eastern Steppe.

WCS Mongolia Country Program Director, Amanda Fine, visited the WCS offices in the Bronx Zoo, NY, March 17-21, for meetings with the Living Landscape Program's coordination unit and the WCS Asia Program staff. Work plans and budgets for both FY 2008 and FY 2009 were reviewed.

Eastern Steppe Community-based Conservation Development: Staff continued to summarize information from the Wildlife Protection Coordination workshop held in February. In addition, an Excel database for summarizing wildlife impacts information collected by volunteer rangers in community-managed areas was developed.

The WCS/USAID Eastern Steppe Conservation Program Manager facilitated the donation of wildlife monitoring equipment to volunteer rangers from community groups

in the Eastern Steppe. The equipment purchase will be funded by donations from WCS private donors, meeting a need identified by an earlier WCS assessment. Volunteer rangers have been selected by community group members and are responsible for monitoring and reporting wildlife use violations in their community-managed areas. The donated equipment – including binoculars, digital cameras and GPS units – will be used by community volunteer rangers to improve wildlife monitoring and wildlife use violations reporting.

Wildlife Trade Law Enforcement

Wildlife Trade Meetings & final market surveys: The WCS/USAID Wildlife Trade Specialist visited the WCS Laos Program in Vientiane to observe their wildlife trade project implementation and management. WCS staff met with the Ministry of Nature and Environment to discuss the wildlife trade law enforcement proposal to the World Bank's Netherlands-Mongolia Trust Fund for Environmental Reform. Students from the National University of Mongolia's Eco-Club finished their survey of Ulaanbaatar raw materials and food markets, hospitals and souvenirs shops and began summarizing data for analysis and final reporting.

WCS Field Veterinary Program

Avian Influenza- GAINS: The Avian Influenza team attended three workshops and meetings during March. The first was a GAINS Database workshop held at the State Central Veterinary Laboratory (SCVL) in Ulaanbaatar. The second workshop was on Wild Bird Surveillance in Zavkhan and Gobi-Altai aimags for 2008. Staff also presented a poster at the International Conference on Zoonotic Disease held at the National Center for Infectious Diseases with Natural Foci (NCIDNF) in Ulaanbaatar.

Upcoming Events

- Community-based Conservation in Mongolia: Successes & Lessons Learned--A workshop bringing together organizations active in community-based wildlife conservation, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, April 16-17, 2008.
- WCS will be co-hosting a workshop at the National University of Mongolia designed to introduce faculty to conservation biology curriculum development resources provided through a program called the Network of Conservation Education Practitioners (NCEP). The NCEP program has been developed by the Center for Biodiversity Conservation of the American Museum of Natural History. WCS has played a significant role in the implementation of the NCEP program outside the U.S., primarily in Africa and Asia.

The Training, Advocacy and Networking Project (TAN)

Mercy Corps

www.mercycorps.org.mn

Latest Round of Civil Society Organization (CSO) Projects Approved

March saw the approval of numerous projects to be implemented by TAN local CSOs over the last seven months of TAN's implementation. CSOs developed proposals based on community assessments that they themselves led at the end of 2007. The development of these proposals involved a significant degree of reworking and revision. This is a

reflection of the fact that TAN's purpose is to enhance CSOs' capacity to develop proposals, with an eye toward building their ability to achieve long-term financial sustainability, and not just to implement projects.

Projects worth \$100,000 were approved in March with local communities contributing approximately 30 percent of that cost. The total beneficiary count from these activities is projected to be over 25,000. The projects to be implemented include the following:

In Bulgan Aimag (Province) the 'Foundation for the Empowerment of Rural Women' CSO is to begin implementing a project designed to *improve medical services* in the remote Bagh No. 1 of Bulgan Soum by providing a variety of community health trainings. Concurrently, they will also lobby local officials to include sufficient funds to cover the operating costs of the community's small clinic into the next soum budget.

In Dundgobi Province, a community assessment in Erdendalai Soum revealed the poor condition of the community's well as the most pressing community issue. As a result, the 'Bayantsagaan Herders Cooperative' CSO is now implementing a project entitled *Well Rehabilitation*, which will both repair the well and provide water hygiene training to the community.

In another project, the 'Bayantsagaan Herders Cooperative' will work with the 'Oldohiin Devjih Herders Cooperative' and TAN social entrepreneur Damba to *mitigate the effects of deforestation in Erdendalai Soum and increase local vegetable production*.

In Arkhangai Province the 'Family Education Council' CSO will implement a project entitled *Supporting Family Counseling Services*. The project will renovate a small building already owned by the CSO for use as a training and counseling center, and will establish a crisis hotline for troubled families. Again in Arkhangai Province two CSOs, 'Youth Federation' and 'Women for Social Progress' will expand on the successes of the aimag's previous *garbage collection* projects.

Two CSOs with a focus on business development, the 'Kherlen Business Association' and the 'Bulgan Khangai Cooperative Development' CSO will implement projects designed to *support small businesses and fight unemployment* in Bulgan and Khentii provinces.

CSOs in Khentii Province (Scout's Association) and Arkhangai Province (Women's Council) will implement projects designed to *fight alcohol abuse* through education and stricter law enforcement.

In the remote Sant Soum of Uvurkhangai Province the top priority identified by the community's youth was lack of access to *computer and English language training*. To address this concern 'Motherland' CSO will help to establish a computer and English language center adjacent to the community's school.

Garbage Collection Forum Organized in Dundgobi

In Dundgobi Province, the local CSO 'Young Generation' organized a public forum concerning its garbage project in Mandalgobi, the provincial capital. Thirty officials from various relevant government departments participated. Citizens attending the forum voiced concerns about the failure to remove garbage in a timely manner and the continued poor condition of nine dumpster collection areas. As a result of the forum, all nine dumpster areas will be repaired and fenced in - four by the local government, the other five by local residents. Furthermore, during the forum a five-member, citizen-government garbage collection committee was established.

Election Monitoring training for local CSOs in Ulaanbaatar

From 27-28 March five TAN CSOs participated in election monitoring training sponsored by the Open Society Forum. A total of 150 participants from local NGOs, political parties and government officials participated as did 23 consultants from 15 foreign countries. Information and experiences were shared from monitoring activities in numerous other countries, particularly former communist countries.

April Activities

- Delivery of health training in schools connected with health and education kit distribution in all TAN aimags.
- Compile data for internal and external capacity indices.
- Facilitate submission of CSO projects to aimag depts. of social welfare and labor.
- Monitor new and continuing projects.
- TAN quarterly meeting.

Innovating, Measuring and Promoting Poverty Alleviation by Cooperatives in Transition Societies (IMPPACTS)

CHF International

www.chfmongolia.org

Cooperative Law Working Group

The working group did not meet in March nor had any meetings scheduled. The IMPPACTS Coordinator met with the working group coordinator to help formulate an explanation regarding the context and purpose of the proposed new cooperative law. The explanation paper details the motivation behind the new draft law, its essential proposals, and how this new law would interact with other related laws.

New Partnership: Mongolia-Germany Bridge NGO

CHF/IMPPACTS signed a memorandum of understanding with this NGO, agreeing to work together in their campaign to replace plastic bags with cotton bags at all major supermarket outlets in Ulaanbaatar. IMPPACTS will develop the criteria for GER clients who will be eligible to produce the cotton bags for the campaign. IMPPACTS will lead a workshop, planned for April, which will focus on the benefits of cooperation and how cooperatives can engage in this program. The workshop will also focus on cooperative rules and registration procedures.

Organizational Assessment II

Work continues on completing the second business group organizational assessment. The questionnaire for business groups and cooperatives was completed in March and fieldwork has begun. The fieldwork is scheduled for completion in May 2008, to be followed by data analysis and report generation during June and July.